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Gypsies

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GYPSIES

(From Rajasthan in Northern India)

They are gypsies
Colorful, bright and tough
Like blossoms in the desert.

The entire earth is tied to their feet
Like an anklet
And they, like their living folklore,
Never stay in one place.

On the sleeves of winding roads
Under barren skies
They sound like their empty vessels
On silent nights.

They bring shrubs
Leaves of palms and dates
To make a roof
For hot summer days.

They cast statues
And sell them
On bustling streets of cities
In towns and villages.

They come and go
They will go back again
Leaving the smell of millet
In the ashes of their hearths

And the melody of their songs
Lingering in the winds.

They are gypsies
Bright, crisp and colorful
Like blossoms in the desert.

— *Kalpana Chitnis*

TWO DAUGHTERS AT HER GRAVE

Mother's philosophy always
sounded like something she pulled
out of a fortune cookie,
bitten into by mistake, damp.

Between clichés,
she tried to nail non-sequiturs
and stop-and-go credos
to the floorboards our minds.

She startled us once, and herself,
like breaking off a long thumbnail.

I know it shook her. Maybe it hurt.
The thing is
she never would repeat it.
And neither you nor I
caught what it was she said.

— *Glenna Holloway*